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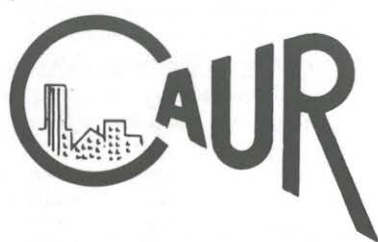
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University of Nebraska at Omaha

# REVIEW

of

## APPLIED URBAN RESEARCH

Volume X, Number 7

December, 1982

### Maintenance and Management Needs in OHA Apartments

By Rebecca S. Fahrlander, Ph.D. and  
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#### Introduction

THE PURPOSE of this study was to obtain input from residents of Omaha Housing Authority apartments for families and senior citizens regarding maintenance and management needs.

The data referred to in this study were based on a survey conducted during the week of March 22, 1982. For the four family units, mail questionnaires were sent to every other household or a total of 599 households. For the 12 senior citizen residences, mail questionnaires were distributed by neighborhood organization presidents to all 1,421<sup>1</sup> occupied housing units. Respondents were asked to return the questionnaires by mail and were assured of the anonymity of their responses.

The response rate for the family units was 21 percent or 127 returned questionnaires. For the senior citizen residences, a total of 795 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 56 percent. The survey instruments consisted of 29 to 31 questions (covering about 70 items) regarding maintenance and management at the OHA buildings.

#### Quality Ratings

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of various OHA facilities and services. These ratings are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Overall, respondents of both types of residences seemed satisfied with most facilities and services. With the exception of snow removal, yard maintenance, and security, all of the items were rated as excellent or good by at least half of the respondents from the family units. (See Table 1.)

Respondents from the apartments for senior citizens were generally more satisfied with all of the services and facilities than were residents of the family units. (See Table 2.) Due to differences in the two types of apartments, residents of the buildings for senior citizens were asked to rate more items than were residents of the family units. The only items which fewer than half (47-49 percent) of the senior citizen respondents rated as excellent or good were the intercom system, the cleaning of halls, and the cleaning of windows.

#### Management and Maintenance

Respondents from the senior citizen units generally rated both management and maintenance higher than did respondents from the family units. Of the senior citizen respondents, 65.4 percent gave the manager a rating of either excellent or good, and another 24.3 percent gave a fair rating. In

TABLE 1  
RATINGS OF OHA SERVICES AND FACILITIES  
(FAMILY UNITS)

|                  | Excellent |         | Good   |         | Fair   |         | Poor   |         | Total  |         |
|------------------|-----------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
|                  | Number    | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Snow removal     | 4         | 3.3     | 29     | 24.0    | 47     | 38.8    | 41     | 33.9    | 121    | 100.0   |
| Yard maintenance | 5         | 4.2     | 22     | 18.5    | 44     | 37.0    | 48     | 40.3    | 119    | 100.0   |
| Pest control     | 19        | 15.4    | 44     | 35.8    | 33     | 26.8    | 27     | 22.0    | 123    | 100.0   |
| Maintenance      | 22        | 18.5    | 53     | 44.5    | 31     | 26.1    | 13     | 10.9    | 119    | 100.0   |
| Heating          | 24        | 19.8    | 47     | 38.8    | 17     | 14.0    | 33     | 27.3    | 121    | 99.9    |
| Lock out         | 11        | 10.6    | 53     | 51.0    | 25     | 24.0    | 15     | 14.4    | 104    | 100.0   |
| Lock change      | 21        | 19.6    | 48     | 44.9    | 28     | 26.2    | 10     | 9.3     | 107    | 100.0   |
| Electricity      | 31        | 26.3    | 54     | 45.8    | 29     | 24.6    | 4      | 3.4     | 118    | 100.1   |
| Plumbing         | 31        | 26.1    | 39     | 32.8    | 38     | 31.9    | 11     | 9.2     | 119    | 100.0   |
| Security         | 10        | 9.3     | 28     | 25.9    | 31     | 28.7    | 39     | 36.1    | 108    | 100.0   |

Note: Totals do not always equal 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 2  
RATINGS OF OHA SERVICES AND FACILITIES  
(SENIOR CITIZEN UNITS)

|                                   | Excellent |         | Good   |         | Fair   |         | Poor   |         | Total  |         |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
|                                   | Number    | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Snow removal                      | 125       | 16.6    | 260    | 34.5    | 195    | 25.9    | 174    | 23.1    | 754    | 100.1   |
| Yard maintenance                  | 170       | 23.3    | 320    | 43.8    | 169    | 23.1    | 72     | 9.8     | 731    | 100.0   |
| Pest control                      | 226       | 30.6    | 347    | 47.0    | 102    | 13.8    | 64     | 8.7     | 739    | 100.1   |
| Maintenance                       | 122       | 17.4    | 321    | 45.7    | 165    | 23.5    | 95     | 13.5    | 703    | 100.1   |
| Heating                           | 166       | 24.2    | 304    | 44.3    | 113    | 16.4    | 104    | 15.1    | 687    | 100.0   |
| Cooling                           | 98        | 20.1    | 214    | 43.9    | 84     | 17.2    | 92     | 18.9    | 488    | 100.1   |
| Lock out                          | 114       | 22.3    | 277    | 54.1    | 79     | 15.4    | 42     | 8.2     | 512    | 100.0   |
| Lock change                       | 99        | 23.2    | 222    | 52.0    | 64     | 15.0    | 42     | 9.8     | 427    | 100.0   |
| Electricity                       | 161       | 27.1    | 342    | 57.6    | 61     | 10.3    | 30     | 5.1     | 594    | 100.1   |
| Trash compactors                  | 146       | 28.3    | 256    | 49.6    | 71     | 13.8    | 43     | 8.3     | 516    | 100.0   |
| Cleaning—rec rooms                | 135       | 20.6    | 252    | 38.5    | 141    | 21.6    | 126    | 19.3    | 654    | 100.0   |
| Cleaning—halls                    | 109       | 15.6    | 225    | 32.3    | 161    | 23.1    | 202    | 29.0    | 697    | 100.0   |
| Cleaning—rest rooms               | 107       | 17.5    | 252    | 41.3    | 124    | 20.3    | 127    | 20.8    | 610    | 99.9    |
| Cleaning—first floor<br>rec rooms | 120       | 19.4    | 253    | 41.0    | 119    | 19.3    | 125    | 20.3    | 617    | 100.0   |
| Cleaning—windows                  | 98        | 15.0    | 210    | 32.1    | 135    | 20.6    | 212    | 32.4    | 655    | 100.1   |
| Laundry                           | 146       | 21.2    | 317    | 46.0    | 138    | 20.0    | 88     | 12.8    | 689    | 100.0   |
| Elevators                         | 84        | 12.6    | 254    | 38.2    | 196    | 29.5    | 131    | 19.7    | 665    | 100.0   |
| Rec rooms/halls                   | 94        | 16.0    | 239    | 40.6    | 142    | 24.1    | 113    | 19.2    | 588    | 99.9    |
| Plumbing                          | 89        | 14.6    | 298    | 48.9    | 153    | 25.1    | 70     | 11.5    | 610    | 100.1   |
| Intercom                          | 79        | 13.1    | 217    | 35.9    | 117    | 19.4    | 191    | 31.6    | 604    | 100.0   |
| Security                          | 92        | 15.6    | 219    | 37.1    | 129    | 21.9    | 150    | 25.4    | 590    | 100.0   |

Note: Totals do not always equal 100% due to rounding.

the family units, 44.2 percent rated the manager as excellent or good, and 36.7 percent as fair. (See Table 3.)

Maintenance was rated as excellent or good by 69.1 percent of the senior citizen unit respondents and 63.1 percent of the family unit respondents. Over one-fifth (21.4 percent) of the senior citizen respondents and 29.5 percent of the family unit respondents rated maintenance as fair.

#### Likes and Dislikes

More respondents reported something they liked about OHA housing than something they disliked.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, respondents mentioned more likes than dislikes. As shown in Table 4, senior citizens most often mentioned security, neighbors, apartment design, and low rent as things they liked, while respondents from the family units most often mentioned low rent, maintenance, and apartment design.

For senior citizens, the most often cited dislikes were inadequate cleaning, problems with other tenants, and inadequate maintenance. Apartment design comprised about the same percentage of the lists of likes and dislikes for this group. (See Table 5.) Inadequate maintenance and problems with other tenants were the most often cited dislikes by respondents in family units.

TABLE 3  
PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

|                                      | Senior Citizen Units |         | Family Units |         |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|---------|--------------|---------|
|                                      | Number               | Percent | Number       | Percent |
| <u>Rating of manager</u>             |                      |         |              |         |
| Excellent                            | 169                  | 25.5    | 11           | 9.2     |
| Good                                 | 264                  | 39.9    | 42           | 35.0    |
| Fair                                 | 161                  | 24.3    | 44           | 36.7    |
| Poor                                 | 68                   | 10.3    | 23           | 19.2    |
| Total                                | 662                  | 100.0   | 120          | 100.1   |
| <u>Rating of maintenance workers</u> |                      |         |              |         |
| Excellent                            | 147                  | 21.0    | 21           | 17.2    |
| Good                                 | 337                  | 48.1    | 56           | 45.9    |
| Fair                                 | 150                  | 21.4    | 36           | 29.5    |
| Poor                                 | 66                   | 9.4     | 9            | 7.4     |
| Total                                | 700                  | 99.9    | 122          | 100.0   |

Note: Totals do not always equal 100% due to rounding

#### Private Apartments Compared

Table 6 compares OHA units with privately owned apartments in which residents formerly lived. Services in OHA buildings were rated as better by 41.5 percent and the same by 52.5 percent of the senior citizen respondents. Cleanliness was rated as better by 39.5 percent and the same by 45.1 percent. Almost one-half (48.5 percent) of the respondents rated security in

OHA buildings as better than in privately owned apartments; another 35.9 percent rated it about the same. Almost two fifths (39.8 percent) of the respondents rated responsiveness to problems as better than in privately owned apartments, and one-half (50.7 percent) rated it the same. Repair and upkeep of facilities was also rated highly, with 41.9 percent rating it as better and 45.5 percent as the same.

Respondents from the family units

tended to rate services, responsiveness to problems, and repair and upkeep of facilities about as highly as did respondents from senior citizen buildings. However, cleanliness and security were more likely to be rated less favorably by family unit respondents than by the senior citizens.

#### Summary

In general, the residents of OHA's apartments for families and for senior citizens who responded to this survey seemed satisfied with most facilities and services. This was especially true of the senior citizen respondents who tended to give somewhat higher ratings than did the family unit respondents.

A majority from both types of residences rated maintenance as excellent or good. Less consensus existed regarding management, with senior citizen respondents rating it higher than did family unit respondents.

More respondents reported something they liked about OHA housing than something they disliked. When asked to compare OHA apartments to privately owned apartments they were familiar with, a majority of both groups rated OHA services, cleanliness, security, responsiveness to problems, and repair and upkeep of facilities as better or the same. Senior citizen respondents tended to rate most items higher than did the family unit respondents. Ratings of services and facilities varied somewhat by residence location.

<sup>1</sup>A total of 1,495 units minus 74 vacancies during the week of the survey.

<sup>2</sup>The number of residents in the senior citizen units who reported at least one like was 515; 218 reported at least one dislike. In the family units, 88 reported at least one like and 67 at least one dislike.

TABLE 4  
RESIDENTS' LIKES

|  | Senior Citizen Units |         | Family Units      |         |
|--|----------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|
|  | Number               | Percent | Number            | Percent |
| <u>What residents like about OHA housing</u> |                      |         |                   |         |
| Security, safety                             | 229                  | 18.0    | 14                | 8.0     |
| Neighbors                                    | 188                  | 14.8    | 8                 | 4.5     |
| Apartment design                             | 157                  | 12.3    | 20                | 11.4    |
| Low rent                                     | 147                  | 11.5    | 66                | 37.5    |
| Location                                     | 124                  | 9.7     | 9                 | 5.1     |
| Privacy, quiet                               | 109                  | 8.6     | 1                 | .6      |
| Activities                                   | 57                   | 4.5     | —                 | —       |
| Management                                   | 53                   | 4.2     | —                 | —       |
| Cleanliness                                  | 45                   | 3.5     | —                 | —       |
| Maintenance                                  | 40                   | 3.1     | 20                | 11.4    |
| Heating/cooling                              | 33                   | 2.6     | —                 | —       |
| Building appearance                          | 12                   | .9      | 5                 | 2.8     |
| Other  | 80                   | 6.3     | 33                | 18.8    |
| Total  | 1,274 <sup>a/</sup>  | 100.0   | 176 <sup>a/</sup> | 100.1   |

<sup>a/</sup>This represents the total number of likes mentioned, not the number of respondents. (Some respondents listed more than one like.)

Note: Totals do not always equal 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 5  
RESIDENTS' DISLIKES

|   | Senior Citizen Units |         | Family Units      |         |
|---|----------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|
|   | Number               | Percent | Number            | Percent |
| <u>What residents dislike about OHA housing</u> |                      |         |                   |         |
| Inadequate cleaning                             | 75                   | 19.5    | 8                 | 5.2     |
| Problems with other tenants                     | 59                   | 15.4    | 34                | 22.2    |
| Inadequate maintenance                          | 57                   | 14.8    | 42                | 27.5    |
| Apartment design                                | 47                   | 12.2    | —                 | —       |
| Security problems                               | 30                   | 7.8     | 7                 | 4.6     |
| Poor management                                 | 22                   | 5.7     | —                 | —       |
| Heating/cooling problems                        | 21                   | 5.5     | 13                | 8.5     |
| Tenant responsibilities                         | 12                   | 3.1     | —                 | —       |
| Rules   | 11                   | 2.9     | 6                 | 3.9     |
| Pest control problems                           | 7                    | 1.8     | 9                 | 5.9     |
| Noise control                                   | 6                    | 1.6     | —                 | —       |
| Lack of activities                              | 6                    | 1.6     | —                 | —       |
| Location  | 4                    | 1.0     | 2                 | 1.3     |
| Other   | 27                   | 7.0     | 32                | 20.9    |
| Total   | 384 <sup>a/</sup>    | 99.9    | 153 <sup>a/</sup> | 100.0   |

<sup>a/</sup>This represents the total number of dislikes mentioned, not the number of respondents. (Some respondents listed more than one dislike.)

Note: Totals do not always equal 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 6  
COMPARISON OF OHA UNITS WITH PRIVATE APARTMENTS

|                                 | Better |         | Same   |         | Worse  |         | Total  |         |
|---------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
|                                 | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Senior Citizen Units            |        |         |        |         |        |         |        |         |
| Services                        | 228    | 41.5    | 288    | 52.5    | 33     | 6.0     | 549    | 100.0   |
| Cleanliness                     | 189    | 39.5    | 216    | 45.1    | 74     | 15.4    | 479    | 100.0   |
| Security                        | 234    | 48.5    | 173    | 35.9    | 75     | 15.6    | 482    | 100.0   |
| Responsiveness to problems      | 176    | 39.8    | 224    | 50.7    | 42     | 9.5     | 442    | 100.0   |
| Repair and upkeep of facilities | 203    | 41.9    | 220    | 45.5    | 61     | 12.6    | 484    | 100.0   |
| Family Units                    |        |         |        |         |        |         |        |         |
| Services                        | 49     | 43.8    | 55     | 49.1    | 8      | 7.1     | 112    | 100.0   |
| Cleanliness                     | 25     | 23.1    | 42     | 38.9    | 41     | 38.0    | 108    | 100.0   |
| Security                        | 30     | 28.6    | 44     | 41.9    | 31     | 29.5    | 105    | 100.0   |
| Responsiveness to problems      | 35     | 33.3    | 59     | 56.2    | 11     | 10.5    | 105    | 100.0   |
| Repair and upkeep of facilities | 42     | 38.5    | 52     | 47.7    | 15     | 13.8    | 109    | 100.0   |



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